

Opening Statement by Mr. Mustafizur Rahman, Charge d'Afaires, Permanent Mission of Bangladesh and Head of the Bangladesh Delegation for the adoption of UPR report in the Human Rights Council, Geneva, 10 June 2009

Mr. President,

I feel honoured to represent the Government of Bangladesh at this session for the adoption of UPR report.

The UPR of Bangladesh, as you know, was held in the UPR Working Group on 3 February 2009. The Bangladesh delegation to the Review was headed by our Hon'ble Foreign Minister. That was her first visit as Foreign Minister after the new Government took over. It reflects the importance the Government attaches to this new human rights mechanism.

Conduct of Universal Periodic Review has been a productive and rewarding experience for Bangladesh. It has obliged us to give deeper look into our human rights situation in the country and identify possible areas where more attention is required. It has offered us an opportunity to engage all relevant government agencies as well as the civil society in the human rights discourse within the country. We benefited tremendously from this collaborative exercise.

The interactive dialogue in the Working Group was very productive. We were happy to witness large number of participation. We learned how our situation and efforts are perceived by the international community. We note with great satisfaction that there had been a positive recognition of our efforts. Some of our accomplishments were considered as examples of best practice. We were also satisfied to see a good level of understanding on the challenges and constraints that my country faces in realizing human rights for all. Despite many achievements, we are also aware that there are a number of shortcomings and room for improvement.

Several delegates referred to our deficits. That was expected and understandable. A number of recommendations were made by delegations during the interactive dialogue. Most of the question and recommendations presented to us were challenging, yet constructive. We have taken all of them very seriously. We have examined them carefully, consulted with relevant departments of the Government and then finalized our response. Our response has being circulated by OHCHR and is available as official document. We could not provide elaborate response due to page limitation, a growing problem that the Council needs to settle earnestly. However, our position on the recommendations, together with the national report and interactive dialogue at the working Group provide complete perspective of our human rights situation, our commitments and future objectives.

I am pleased to inform the Council that the Government has accepted almost all recommendations. Action has already been initiated to implement some of the recommendations. One or two recommendations could not be accepted as these are in conflict with our constitution, legal provisions or deeply held social values. We have given explanations in a few cases for better understanding of the context within which we strive to guarantee human rights protection of our people. I hope that the Council would understand and appreciate our approach.

Mr. President,

Our commitment to the promotion of human rights is not limited to these recommendations. We are convinced that we need to continuously pursue higher norms and standards, be it in the area of human rights or in socio-economic development. We have necessary institutional framework in place to address all human rights challenges. Our democratic polity, independent judiciary, free media, vibrant civil society and the newly established independent national human rights commission provide the requisite framework for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Most of the human rights challenges that Bangladesh faces are rooted in poverty and underdevelopment. Poverty results in the lack of economic empowerment and deprives many to exercise their civil, political, social and cultural rights. We are convinced that eradication of poverty will resolve many of the human rights problems that we are facing today. As a result, the Bangladesh government has given priority attention to the alleviation of poverty. Through a range of homegrown ideas and policies, such as micro-credit, non-formal education, and social safety net programmes, we seek to achieve development and enable all citizens to enjoy the full spectrum of human rights.

We will continue to strive for further progress. We are confident that we will have significant progress to report in our pursuit of human rights by our next review. We remain open to suggestions and advice in this regard.

With this brief remark on our response to the recommendations, I would look forward to the comments of distinguish participants.

I thank you.